BASIC STATEMENTS

From: THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF AMERICA...By: E.S.Gaustad

John Gresham Machen comments in *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* (1936) on the inspiration of the biblical writing.

> What, then, shall we think about the Bible? I will tell you very plainly what I think we ought to think. I will tell you very plainly what I think about it. I hold that the Biblical writers, after having been prepared for their task by the providential ordering of their lives, received, in addition to all that, a blessed and wonderful and supernatural guidance and impulsion by the Spirit of God, so that they were preserved from the errors that appear in other books and thus the resulting book, the Bible, is in all its parts the very Word of God, completely true in what it says regarding matters of fact and completely authoritative in its commands.
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> That is the doctrine of full or "plenary" inspiration of Holy Scripture.

Reinhold Niebuhr in *Christianity and Crisis* (January 24, 1955) distinguishes between genuine religion and the noise made in its name.

> A visitor to our shores would probably come to the same conclusion at which St. Paul arrived in regard to the Athenians, namely, that we are "very religious." But the judgment might not imply a compliment any more than Paul wanted to so imply when he called attention to the worship of many gods in Athens, including the "unknown god." Our religiosity seems to have as little to do with the Christian faith as the religiosity of the Athenians.

H. Richard Niebuhr, brother of Reinhold and long-time professor of Christian ethics at Yale University, describes the Protestant's relationship to the "democratic faith" in *The Shaping of American Religion* (1961).

> Protestantism in all its original forms has been concerned to emphasize the direct and absolute dependence of all men and their societies on God, and only in that setting has it affirmed independence from finite powers. Its protests against churches and states have been directed less against invasions of the rights of men than against usurpations of the absolute sovereignty of God. . . . The right to freedom of worship for such Protestants has been based on the duty to worship God; the right to freedom in speech on the duty to speak the truth as the truth is known; the rights of conscience have been derivative, for them, from the human duty to obey God rather than men. . . . [Protestantism] must protest against the assumption by any human authority—whether priest, preacher, magistrate, people, or popular majority—of the right to speak in the name of the absolute. . . . If Protestantism in America has lost sight of these points and accepted instead the dogmas of democratic faith, then indeed it has lost its independence; then it no longer challenges the social faith but is a passive representative of the culture.